DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 960 CE 071 108

AUTHOR Ellis, Patricia
TITLE Non-Formal Education and Empowerment of Women: Report of a Study in the Caribbean.
PUB DATE Dec 94
NOTE 43p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Educational Objectives; Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; *Nonformal Education; *Outcomes of Education; *Participant Satisfaction; Participatory Research; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *Caribbean; *Empowerment

ABSTRACT

A participatory research approach was used to determine the extent to which nonformal education (NFE) programs have contributed to the empowerment of women living on four Caribbean islands. Twelve agencies/organizations/providers on the islands of Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent that have offered NFE programs to women between 1992 and 1993 were surveyed along with 80 women who had participated in the NFE programs and facilitators/tutors from selected programs. It was discovered that, during the study period, the 12 agencies offered a variety of education and training programs for women. The programs ranged from broad-based public education efforts to programs (long/short courses and workshops) designed to teach specific job-related skills. Although all the program providers were attempting to meet women's educational, social, economic, and political needs, not all of them were consciously using their programs as a strategy to empower women. Several program participants did, however, credit NFE with making them more aware of women's situation and the factors responsible for it. It was concluded that, although many of the NFE programs studied did help participants achieve personal and, to a lesser extent, political empowerment, they have been unsuccessful in helping women achieve economic empowerment. (MN)

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NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

REPORT OF A STUDY IN THE CARIBBEAN

BY

PATRICIA ELLIS

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I INTRODUCTION

In most countries of the world a large number of women participate in a variety of adult Non-Formal Education programmes. These programmes are organized and provided by many different institutions, agencies and organizations including, Government Educational Institutions, NGOs, Women's Organisations and Development Agencies. Together the programmes offered by these agencies cover a wide variety of subject areas and topics.

However, while there may be some evidence that women who participate in these programmes do benefit in some way, very little research has been done to show whe/*8956230.ther and to what extent Non-Formal Education Programmes are helping women to better understand themselves, their situation, status or position as women in their societies. Additionally, there is little evidence to show if or how these programmes are empowering women so that they become motivated and confident to question and challenge discriminatory practices, to take control over their lives or to act to change their situation.

This research study on Non-Formal Education And Empowerment of Women was undertaken in order to find out the extent to which Non-Formal Education Programmes have contributed to the empowerment of women who participated in them. It was designed to provide an opportunity for a small number of women in the Caribbean and the South Pacific to examine and reflect on their experience of participating in NFE programmes, has generate empirical data that provide insights about the opinions and views od providers and facilitators of these programmes and about the experiences of the women who participate in them. The data could also be useful in helping provides to reorient and improve NFE programmes so that they might be more effective in empowering providers helping women to transform their lives. The report describes and analyses the data collected in the Caribbean.

II RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EMPOWERMENT

Social research is an activity undertaken in order to find out more about reality. In the process new information, insights and perspectives are gained, new knowledge generated, and a great deal is learnt about people, about their social reality, the situations in which they live and the factors that are responsible for their condition. Research is therefore an important aspect of education and a key element in the process of learning. At the same time, since knowledge is power and since research generates knowledge and facilitates learning, both research and education have the potential and can be used as tools to empower people. When people become empowered they are often motivated to take action to transform their lives and change their situation.

EMPOWERMENT

To be empowered people must not only have a better understanding of the factors that determine their situation, but must also have the self-confidence to take control of their lives and destiny and be able and willing to act to transform and improve the existing situation. This concept of empowerment is based on the belief that people should participate fully in decisions that affect their lives.

The process of becoming empowered involves:

1. **Awareness and Increased Consciousness:**

   First, people must become aware that they can take action to transform, change and improve their lives and situation. They can achieve this through a process of reflection and analysis of their experience. Through this process they become more conscious of themselves, of their

situation, and of the factors that are responsible for determining and keeping them in their present condition. At the same time, they also become aware of the possibility of change, and realize that they have choices and that they can initiate and control change. This realization often motivates them to act.

2. **Acquisition of Knowledge, Skills and Self-Confidence:**

With new awareness and understanding of the factors that create undesirable situations, disadvantaged conditions and a sense of powerlessness, and with the desire to bring about change, comes also the recognition of the need for additional knowledge, and new skills, and for the confidence to use these to change reality. Among these are knowledge and skills in critical thinking and political analysis of social reality which will lead to new insights and perspectives and to explore action of alternatives; and skills in mobilizing, organizing and planning. Acquisition of knowledge and skills helps people to become more confident of their ability to act to bring about change.

3. **Decision to Act:**

With increased consciousness, better understanding, new knowledge and skills and improved self confidence people are not only better equipped but are more prepared to take action, to initiate and to manage change.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

While education tends to be resistent to change and to support and reinforce the status quo, Non-Formal Education (NFE) and training are both essential and critical to

the processes of empowerment and transformation and have the potential to bring about change. NFE activities can help people to:

- gain critical consciousness, deeper awareness and new perspectives, and a better understanding of their social reality.

- get a better understanding of the factors that determine their situation, that reinforce and perpetuate their position of disadvantage, and that contribute to their feelings of powerlessness.

- question and challenge existing beliefs (their own and others), societal structures, systems, and arrangements.

- become aware that change is possible and to identify the changes that they desire.

- acquire the skills and develop the capabilities that they need to be able to bring about change.

However, many providers of NFE programmes fail to realize or recognize the potential of NFE to empower learners and to facilitate social change. As a result, large number of agencies and groups that organize and offer these programmes regard them only as vehicles for transmitting knowledge and skills and possibly for leading to some change in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals. Because of this, many NFE programmes do not help learners to see the links between their own reality, situation and problems at the micro level and the larger social issues like gender inequality and discrimination of women at the macro level. Since there can be no real social change except where awareness is built on and linked to social issues, it is important for providers of NFE to become aware of this and within their programmes to provide

opportunities for learners to examine and analyze social issues and to understand how their lives are being affected by these.

NFE AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Because women's main role and primary value to society is still seen to be "good wives and mothers", education and training programmes are generally designed to prepare them for this role and to keep them locked into political and economic situations, and in social relationships that reinforce and perpetuate their position of disadvantage and powerlessness vis-a-vis that of men.

Traditional NFE programmes for women concentrate on equipping them with skills to enable them to perform their reproductive rather than their productive roles. However, many women who participate in NFE programmes are motivated by economic necessity and by the desire to acquire marketable skills in order to increase their incomes. To meet this need several agencies have implemented skills training and income-generating projects for women. Ironically, in many of these programmes women have been taught traditional *"female"* skills that are of little market value and have received little if any training in other areas which are critical to the success of economic enterprises: for example; understanding the economy, market research and marketing, small business management, costing and pricing, and accounting procedures. As a result, many skills training programmes and projects have not only led to disappointment and frustration, but have continued to marginalize women and to keep them outside of the mainstream of the formal sectors of the economy.

However, increased awareness and understanding about how education and training can perpetuate women's position of disadvantage and increase and reinforce their feelings of inadequacy, has led to the realization that such programmes and projects are tools of disempowerment, and that participation in them often increases women's

sense of powerlessness. Consequently over the last decade there has been a gradual shift in the orientation and focus of NFE programmes being offered to women. Many more programmes are now being designed to increase women's awareness and understanding of the factors that are responsible for their oppression and position of disadvantage, to address their specific problems and to meet their particular needs, others to build their self-esteem and develop their self-confidence by valuing and validating their knowledge, skills and experience. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of programmes that seek to train women in a variety of skills including training in non-traditional skills in the areas of science, trades and technology, in problem-solving, planning and management, in critical thinking and political analysis, and in networking, lobbying, negotiating and strategizing.

By participating in NFE and training workshops that focus on building awareness and critical consciousness women have learnt how to better articulate their experience of oppression and feelings of powerlessness. They have also gained a better understanding of the factors; patriarchal ideology, existing societal structures, systems and arrangements, among others, that are responsible for women's position and condition in society. As a result they have become aware of the need not only to focus on their individual experience of disadvantage and powerlessness, but to examine, analyze, challenge, and attempt to change the oppressive societal structures within which women operate. With this new critical consciousness many women have gained a better understanding and a different perspective of their problems, have became aware that they have choices and that it is possible for them to initiate change. They have also realized that for women to be able to change things, in addition to skills and confidence, they also need to have power.

In NFE programmes that attempt to empower women, while the focus and content have been on awareness-building and consciousness-raising, skill-building, decision-making and collective action, care has also been taken to ensure that the

methodologies and processes being used facilitate learning and lead to empowerment. As women participate together in NFE programmes activities that display these characteristics, as together they reflect on and analyze their common experience, and as they acquire new skills and gain greater confidence, they become empowered and often decide to take some action either individually or collectively to transform their lives and to change their situation.

However in spite of increase in the number of NFE programmes that are attempting to empower women there are still large numbers of NFE and training activities that continue to focus only on women's traditional, reproductive roles and so to marginalize and disempower them.

III THE STUDY

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine some NFE programmes in which women have participated and to ascertain the extent to which they have contributed to empowering women.

2. Bring together some women who have participated in NFE programmes to reflect on their lives as women and their experience of participating in these programmes.

3. Motivate these women to take some action to transform their lives and their situation.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was designed to include:

- A survey of sixteen (16) agencies/organizations/providers, in four islands Caribbean, and of the NFE programmes (short courses/workshops) that they had offered to women between 1992 and 1993.

- A survey of eighty (80) women, who had participated in these programmes.

- Interviews with the facilitators/tutors of the selected programmes.

Research workshops in each country.

Questionnaires, interviews and participatory workshops were the instruments of data collection. The findings and outcomes of the research were shared with all the organizations and individuals who participated.

In the Caribbean the study was carried out in Barbados, Grenada, Carriacou and Petit martinique, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. These islands all lie within the Caribbean Sea and are washed by the Atlantic Ocean on the East. Two of them, Grenada and St. Vincent are multi-island states. The last three are Windward Islands and are mountainous, but Barbados the most easterly is flat. While these countries are all English Speaking, in St. Lucia a French Patois is widely spoken. The islands are fairly close to each other, share a similar culture and are easily accessible by air.

All four islands are small independent nations and members of the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), a political grouping of Caribbean States. Their economies are based on agriculture and tourism, and as they have few natural resource their greatest and most valuable resource is their populations. In all of these countries education is given a great deal of priority and although functional literacy is now being recognized a problem, literacy rates are significantly higher than in most developing countries. Education is free for all up to secondary school and in many cases up to university level. On the whole girls are performing better than boys at all levels of the education systems.

Barbados, with a population of just over a quarter of million, is the most densely populated and most developed of the four. The other three have an average population of about a hundred thousand. In all of the four countries just over half of the population is women, and over forty percent of the households are headed by women.

THE CONTENT

The study was carried out in Barbados, Grenada St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

METHODOLOGY

The use of a participatory research approach ensured that women were involved in identifying programmes to be examined and in collecting, analyzing and interpreting research data. The research was coordinated by the author an educator with extensive experience in adult non-formal education and in working with women and on gender issues, and in each country a woman was identified to do the survey and to facilitate the workshops. This approach also provided opportunity during the workshops for women to analyze and reflect on their experience as women and as participants in NFE programmes, to identify and discuss issues that are important to them, and to think about how they might draw on their experiences and use the new information and insights gained from participating in the various programmes and in the research, to bring about change in their lives and situation.

In each of these countries the government has established National Machinery for the Integration of Women in Development. In Barbados there is a Bureau of Women's Affairs, in Grenada and St. Lucia Departments of Women's Affairs and in St. vincent a Women's Desk. In Barbados the Department of Continuing Studies is a part of the main Campus of the University of the West Indies and in each of the three Windward Islands there is a University Centre. There are several NGOs and Development Agencies in all of the islands.

In all of the countries there are also numerous opportunities for adults to participate in adult non-formal education programmes. These programmes are organized by a variety of agencies and groups, and include short courses, seminars and workshops at the community, national and regional levels and as in other countries, the majority of participants are women.

Over the last fifteen years, as a result of the United Nations Decade for Women and the International Women's Movement, there has been a great deal of activity the aim of which was to increase awareness about the role, status and position of Caribbean women. As a result, there has also been an increase in the number of non-formal education programmes geared to women. Many of these programmes were designed specifically to provide women with knowledge and skills that would enable them not only to contribute but to benefit equally with their male counterparts from development efforts.

THE SAMPLE

Because the researcher has worked for many years in the region and has an intimate knowledge of and on-going relationships with institutions, agencies and organizations

in all of the countries, it was easy for her to identify and contact the four agencies in each country that would participate in the study. These were Departments of Women's Affairs/Women's Bureau, National Women's Organizations, Development Agencies and the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies.

Each of these agencies were sent information about the study along with a questionnaire, and asked to send the names of women who had participated in one of their programmes offered to women between 1992 and 1993. Three of the University Centres indicated that they had not offered any programmes for women during that year. Two of the programmes selected were jointly sponsored, one in St. Lucia offered by the Women's Advisory Committee of the Civil Service Association in collaboration with the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, and one in Barbados offered by the Women's Bureau in collaboration with the UWI School of Continuing Studies. The final sample was drawn from women who participated in the programmes of the other three agencies that had been identified in each country. From the lists received for each country a random sample of twenty-five women was drawn.

In each country the researcher also identified an assistant researcher to administer questionnaires to the women selected in the sample and to the facilitators/tutors of the identified programmes, and to organize and facilitate the research workshops. The woman in Barbados was a trained social worker with experience in community education, in Grenada she was a researcher in the Department of Women's Affairs, in St. Lucia she was the Chief Agricultural Planner and an Executive Member of the Women's Advisory Committee of the Civil Service Association, and in St. Vincent an experienced adult educator and community worker.

CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

Because of the limited funding in the Caribbean, in the multi-island states (Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique and St. Vincent and The Grenadines), the research was limited to programmes offered on the main islands (Grenada and St. Vincent). Moreover women on the main islands have more opportunities to participate in a larger number and wider variety of NFE and training activities than women in their sister islands.

Because of a number of problems, questionnaires were only administered and completed by forty-five of the seventy-five women selected in the sample (60%). In Barbados and Grenada and St. Lucia, the contact person experienced great difficulty in getting in touch with some of the women, and several others were unwilling to answer the questionnaire. In all of the countries smaller numbers of women participated in the workshops than was expected. In the case of St. Lucia, after several unsuccessful attempts and the inability to agree on a time convenient to all of the women, especially to the group of hairdressers who had participated in a small business management course, the workshop was eventually cancelled. Given women's multiple roles and the double burden that they bear this phenomena was not unexpected and was unavoidable.

Because some of the programs selected were three month courses rather than short workshops, several tutors had been involved in teaching different topics covered. In these cases the one that was most easily accessible and available was interviewed.

In spite of these limitations from the data collected it is possible to identify several important issues. However, because of the small numbers in the sample and of the response, the findings cannot be used to make broad generalizations or definitive statements about the impact of NFE programs on women's lives.

V THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

The research process was initiated by the researcher. She identified the providers in each country and sent them information about the project. Once she had received the information that she had requested, she drew the sample and sent them the names of the women selected to the researcher in each country. The latter then administered the questionnaires to the women in the sample and to the facilitators/tutors of the programmes that had been selected. Once the questionnaires had been completed, they collated the data, and organized and facilitated the workshops. The coordinator co-facilitated the workshops in Barbados, Grenada, analyzed the data and compiled the research report.

THE SURVEY

THE AGENCIES

Twelve agencies in four countries participated in the study. They were:

BARBADOS : The Bureau of Women's Affairs
Women in Development (WID)
Young Women Christian Association (YWCA)

GRENADA : Agency for Rural Transformation (ART)
Department of Women's Affairs
Grenada Community Development Agency (GRENCODA)

ST LUCIA : Division of Women's Affairs
National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF)

ST. VINCENT: Bureau of Women's Affairs
Committee for the Development of Women (CDW)
National Association for Mass Education (NAME)

All of these agencies have worked with women and/or with women's organizations for many years. Through their work they have identified some of the specific educational and training needs of women and this along with the existing socio-economic climate the need for economic diversification, and the increase in social problems like AIDS and domestic violence, have motivated them to organize and offer NFE programmes that could empower women and enable them to have greater control over their lives. They recruited women for their programmes in many ways. Some advertised in the local print and electronic media, some sent letters to women's organizations, some invited women from groups with which they have contact or with which they were already working, and some targeted particular women or groups of women.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Women who participated in the study ranged in age from 15 to 45 years. They were civil servants, nurses and teachers, pharmacists, secretaries, cleaners, unemployed women and entrepreneurs. In Barbados all of the women who were interviewed were employed but in the other islands there were a mixture of employed and unemployed. While most of the women had children, having young children did not seem to prevent them from participating in education and training programmes and all of them had previously participated in NFE programmes. A significant number of women surveyed said that they obtained what they had expected from the programmes examined, but some said that they did not.

Several of the women had participated in other non-formal education activities especially in short one or two day workshops other than those selected in this study. Within these workshops they had been able to obtain information and to discuss a wide variety of topics and to acquire several skills, e.g.

Topics covered	Skills acquired
Parent Education	Self Defence (Karate)
The Economy	Home management
The Environment	Project development
Women in Trade Unions	Proposal writing
Women in Development	Training
Women Studies	Non-Traditional Skills
Women in the Workplace	Carpentry, electrical wiring
Child Development/Child Care	Secretarial, Photography
Disaster preparedness	Computer

THE PROGRAMMES

During the period 1992-1993 the twelve agencies offered a variety of education and training programmes for women. The programmes ranged from broad-based public education e.g. call-in radio programmes, to those designed to teach women specific job-related skills. They included topics intended to help women to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to acquire technical skills as well as to increase their awareness and understanding of the factors that determine and are responsible for their condition and their position in society. The programmes took various forms and included symposia, long and short courses (2 years, 9 months, 3 months, 10 weeks), workshops (1-7 days) and training sessions (2-4 hours). Two programmes in Barbados were offered on an on-going basis.

A wide variety and large number of topics and areas were covered by the programmes identified by providers in the survey, they include:

- Self-development, self-esteem, assertiveness training
- Leadership training, counselling
- Women and work, resource identification and use
- Vocational skills, including non-traditional skills
- Small business management
- Women's health, women and AIDS
- Parent education, education for teenage mothers
- Domestic violence, child abuse, self defence for women
- Women and the law, women in trade unions, women in politics
- The economy, the environment, disaster preparedness
- Gender and development, gender analysis, gender planning

The wide range of topics covered is evidence that the sponsoring institutions have recognized the need for programmes to increase women's ability and capability to address their problems and concerns, to develop their full potential and to facilitate their active involvement in the development of their countries.

In all cases the content was determined by the agency or by the facilitators, tutors and resource persons, and none of the women were involved either in choosing and deciding the content or in planning the programmes. However they did have an opportunity to evaluate them at the end, both orally and in writing. The methods used to deliver the programmes ranged from informal, participatory and interactive to the more didactic formal lectures.

The twelve programmes selected for inclusion in the study were.

Programmes	Providers
BARBADOS	
Civil Education for National Leadership	Bureau of Women's Affairs
Small Business Management	Women in Development
Programme of Further Education	Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A)
GRENADA	
Women and Work	Agency for Rural Transformation
Non-Traditional Skills - Tiling	Department of Women's Affairs
Skills Training - Craft	GRENCODA
ST. LUCIA	
Leadership Training	Division of Women's Affairs
Small Business Management	National Research and Development Foundation
Non-Traditional Skills	Women's Advisory Committee Public Service Association
ST. VINCENT	
Women in Politics	Committee for the Development of Women's

Women and Violence	Bureau of Women's Affairs
Leadership Training	National Association for Mass Education (NAME)

These programmes reflect the providers' response to women's educational need and fall into three broad categories:

1. **Employment Creation and Small Business Management**

In all of the countries in the study a significant number (over 40%) of households are headed by women who are responsible for meeting the financial needs of their families. In all of these countries too, unemployment is high and there are more unemployed women than there are men. In addition, like many other countries in the Caribbean they have been affected, to a greater or lesser extent, by structural adjustment programmes and not surprisingly many women are suffering the negative effects of these programs. Several have lost their jobs, and with cutbacks in the social services women's already heavy burdens have increased.

Against this background employment creation, income generation and the development and management of small/micro businesses are critical for survival, and several agencies have intensified their efforts to provide training in vocational/job-related skills and in small business management for women. The sponsoring institutions in this study among them offered twenty-three (23) such programmes in the last year. Nine (39.13%) of these training programmes were in non-traditional skills and five (21.73%) in small business management. One agency also provided the opportunity for women entrepreneurs to exhibit their producers at national trade exhibitions.

Of the four skills training programmes in which women in the sample participated, two focused on traditional and two on non-traditional skills. As expected most of the women who participated in these were either unemployed or under-employed and hoped to be able to use the skill gained to generate income and to increase their earning capacity. However few have been able to achieve this, and during the workshops it became clear that although the programmes did teach skills, they did not provide the women with enough information about markets and did not impress upon them. The importance of doing market research, costing and pricing. Neither did they help the women to acquire skills in planning, organizing and record keeping, all of which are essential for developing and managing a successful economic enterprise.

On the other hand, small business training programmes did provide the women who participated with this information and with skills that enabled them to translate ideas into profitable businesses. Unlike many who participated in the skills training programmes, those who did the small business courses were already entrepreneurs engaged in some type of business. Participation in the programme therefore helped them to become more focused, to realize the importance of planning, and gave them more confidence in their ability to manage on their own.

2. Leadership Training

A research study on Women in Organizations undertaken in 1990 by the National Council of Women in St. Vincent among 40 organizations, revealed that women do hold leadership positions. However these are usually positions of secretary and/or assistant secretary/treasurer which have a low profile and which are based on stereotyping and on societal norms and expectations. The study also found that organizational structures and processes limited and prevented women from being at the forefront of organizations. In addition it showed that some organizations believed that organizing special programmes for women would hinder rather than foster gender

equality.

In the present study, seven of the twelve agencies have offered programmes of leadership training for women. These were designed to help women acquire the skills and confidence that would enhance their participation in community and national affairs and increase their ability to undertake and perform leadership roles in their organizations and in the wider society. The Division of Women's Affairs in St. Lucia brought together women leaders from about twenty-eight community/women's groups in a Training of Trainers programme that attempted to enhance their leadership skills and increase their ability to perform leadership roles in the community effectively. The Women's Bureau in Barbados exposed leaders from women's organization to such topics as: how the country works, contributions of outstanding Barbadian women, organizations that help women, and change and how to manage it. In St. Vincent the women who participated in a two day workshop on leadership gained insights into the characteristics of a good leader, recognized that women 'didn't have a voice', and felt that because of their participation in the workshop they would be better able to help women, and to do something to change women's situation.

3. Women's Issues, Gender Issues

During the last five years, there has been both an increase in the number of NFE programmes dealing with women's issues and a shift in orientation to focus on gender issues, and to examine and analyze factors that perpetuate women's oppression and that have led to an increase in violence against women. Gender training programmes also helped women to become aware of discriminatory laws and practices within organizations and in society as a whole, and to better understand the reasons for the existence of unequal gender relations in the family, the community and the larger society.

The twelve providers/agencies in this study offered twenty such programmes over the period of 12 to 18 months. Most of the programmes took the form of short workshops and a small number of men participated in some of them. Programmes in Barbados and St. Lucia addressed issues relating to women's health, and the Women's Bureau in Barbados in collaboration with the National Association of Nurses and the National Organization of Women also organized a symposium on women's health during their annual health fair. The YWCA in Barbados ran workshops on Women's Rights and in Self Defence for Women. In Grenada the Agency for Rural Transformation runs an on-going education programme for teenage mothers and has conducted workshops on Women and Work and on Gender Analysis. In St. Vincent the Committee for the Development of Women ran workshops on Women in Politics and the Women's Affairs Department organized symposia on Domestic Violence, on Women and the Law and conducted a series of workshops on Gender Analysis and Gender Planning.

Of the twelve programmes examined in detail, only three (two in St. Vincent on Women in Politics and on Handling Domestic Violence, and one in Grenada on Women and Work) dealt specifically with gender issues. In the leadership training programmes where/when/if these issues emerged during discussion they were treated as incidental and not dealt with in any depth. In the skills training programmes gender issues were not dealt with at all.

THE FACILITATORS/TUTORS

In most cases facilitators and tutors in the twelve programmes were chosen by the agency sponsoring the programme. They were usually people with knowledge of the particular topic, and the majority also had some experience in working on women's issues and/or with women's groups. Their training included university degrees, teacher training, technical training, training in community work and exposure to

gender training.

They believed that many women are still lagging behind, that the society pressures women, keeps them in a second class position, and that many women do not have the confidence to reject this and to make a change in their lives. They also recognized that because of male dominance, male/female relations are conflictual, and that while it is necessary for men and women to recognize their differences it is important for them to understand and be willing to accept that these differences do not make one superior and the other inferior.

They indicated that rapid changes in economic and social conditions are leading to changes in women's situation and that more women want to take control of their lives and destiny. They saw adult non-formal education as a way of meeting women's educational needs, giving them a second chance, of increasing their employability, of giving them skills to be able to analyze their situation, and the confidence to initiate change.

THE WORKSHOPS

Workshops were held in Barbados, Grenada and St. Vincent. Each workshop followed the same format. Following an activity in which participants introduced themselves, the facilitator gave background information about the project. A summary of the data from the completed questionnaires was then presented on flip charts. Answers to each question were discussed and new/additional information added. During this discussion several women also referred to their experiences of participating in other NFE and training programmes, besides the ones being examined in this study. This supplemental information was also put on flip charts. Through this activity, the findings of data collated on questionnaires was validated by workshop participants.

Several important issues emerged from these discussions. Among these were: women's position in society, the types of NFE programmes in which women participate, the benefits derived from participating, women's problems and concerns, and the kinds of education programmes that they need. These were further discussed in small groups and the women put forward suggestions about how NFE and training programmes might prepare and equip women to be better able to address and deal with the issues.

The workshops provided an opportunity for women to reflect on and analyze their experiences of participating in NFE programmes. Participation in the workshops - themselves an NFE activity - made them more aware of other options, that they had choices, and of the need for NFE and training programmes to address issues of women's continuing position of disadvantage and of unequal gender relations.

In all of the workshops the issue of male/female gender relations provoked extensive and animated discussions as women shared both positive and negative experiences with their male partners, employers and co-workers. Several women in two of the workshops stressed the need for men, especially young men, to be exposed to gender training.

Another important outcome of the workshops was a number of concrete suggestions about the type and focus of NFE programmes for women. Workshops participants felt that it was necessary to:

1. Organize more education programmes for women to raise their awareness, to provide them with information and to help them to acquire skills, e.g., self development, inter-personal skills, coping with stress, how to choose a mate.

2. Ensure that issues relating to women's oppression and their empowerment are addressed within all NFE programmes being offered to women.

3. Use a methodology that would enable women to take action following/as a result of participating in the programme.

4. Prepare a skills bank of facilitators, and resource persons who are trained, qualified and experienced in conducting workshops and in working with women.

5. Organize specific NFE programmes to focus on key issues that affect women's lives. For example: women's health, women and work, management training, gender training, women and politics, women and the law, women and violence.

VI THE FINDINGS

PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS

Women in this study participated in the programmes for a variety of reasons. Among these were:

- To obtain information and increase their knowledge about a number of topics and issues e.g. politics, violence, gender.

- To acquire skills that they could use to generate income and/or to improve their earning capacity.

- To relieve boredom and stress and to *"get an evening out"*.

- To be able to *"talk with children and reason with husband"*.

The women expected that the programme in which they participated would meet their needs, however this was not always the case. For example, in Barbados, while 85% of the women surveyed reported that they got what they expected, in Grenada 62.5% reported that they did not get what they had expected. Further in Grenada two of the programmes examined were intended to help the women learn traditional and non-traditional skills in order to increase their opportunities for employment, but few of the participants were able to create or obtain employment when they had completed these three month programmes.

Benefits derived from Participating in the Programmes

All of the women who provided information for this study said that they had benefitted from participating in the various programmes. They had obtained new information, acquired new skills, shared experiences with other women and become more aware of the reasons for women's disadvantaged position in society. They also welcomed the opportunity to meet new people, to discuss ideas, and to interact with and learn from other women. Some of them learnt how to negotiate in disagreements and several said that they had gained self-confidence, recognized ways in which they could become more self-reliant, and realized that they could manage on their own.

At the same time many realized that they were ignorant about many things and that there was a need for women to continue to participate in NFE programmes.

Other benefits cited included:

- improvement in literacy and numeracy.
- networking.
- increased awareness and better understanding of issues like domestic violence.
- realization that housewives are workers and that housework should be valued.

Education, Training and Change

In addition to benefits, the study attempted to find out the extent to which the programmes examined had helped women to change their attitudes and behaviour and the way they did things. The data from the questionnaire show that women reported the following:

Attitudinal Change

While several women reported a change in their attitudes, in Grenada 43.7% of the women reported no such change. Changes identified included:

- more positive attitude towards running a business.
- became more outspoken.
- careful of how they voted on election day that took place for months after the course.
- learnt to see and accept the point of view of others without being indifferent.
- developed a greater desire to participate and to see others participate.
- learnt humility.
- no longer willing to accept myths about domestic violence e.g. "If he doesn't beat her, he doesn't love her", "she beg for it".
- more willing to mix with people.
- more patience and perservance.
- learnt that all work is important.

Changes in Ability/Capability

Most of the respondents said that programmes had led to some change in the way they did things or managed, for example:

- gained more confidence in their ability to manage on their own.

- more apt to think through decisions, to count the cost and to budget carefully.

now know where to get help when necessary.

- learned how to plan.
- increased their ability to express themselves on issues.
- developed a business plan, good record keeping an accounting systems.
- learnt how to motivate people.

Behavioural Changes

- change in behaviour towards business people because of the realization that having a business does not always mean having money.
- learnt to adjust behaviour to suit workers' needs.
- learnt the value of "each one teaches one" and recognized ability to pass on skills to others.

A significant number of women (65%) in Barbados said that participating in the programme did not lead to any change in their behaviour. Some in Grenada indicated that the course/programme was not geared to this. Others cited childish behaviour and rivilary among participants as obstacles to change.

Analysis of the data suggests that while the programme did succeed in teaching skills and did lead to some change in attitudes they were less successful in changing behaviour. Because attitudinal and behavioural change does not happen overnight, and is influenced by several factors, providers of NFE programmes for women need to pay more attention, and to be clear about what they are attempting to change and to build in some mechanisms to assess whether and to what extent the changes did

take place, why and/or why not. However most of the programmes, especially the workshops, are short "one-off" events this dimension is often missing, and even in most of the larger (3 month) programmes there is little if any follow up or long term evaluation to assess effect and/or impact of the training.

Awareness Building and Consciousness Raising

The study also attempted to ascertain the extent to which the programmes had increased women's awareness of themselves as women and of women's position and situation, and whether they had raised women's consciousness about gender roles and relations.

Some women in Barbados (35%) said that since they were already aware of themselves as women, the programmes did not help them. However, while the majority in Grenada gave a similar answer, the reason given was that "the few discussions that took place on this issue always ended in confusion". Other women in the sample said that the programmes did help them to:

- realize that women were often deprived of their rights and of justice.
- become more aware of women's rights.
- realize that women can use their skills to become independent.
- women can achieve - *"as a woman I can achieve"*.
- realize that although society sees women as second class citizens, they are capable.
- understand that women did not have a "voice" as they should.
- realize that more women are needed in decision-making positions.
- be more aware of the experiences of other women.
- know about the outstanding contribution of women in their society.
- become aware of the lack of support for women from family members

and from the community.

- question why *"women have to face more burdens than men"*.
- realize that it is important for women to help other women.
- believe that women have the potential to help themselves.
- recognize that women are vulnerable when they are forced to be economically dependent on their partners.
- see that, *"women are getting beaten underfoot even though men don't have the education women have"*.

A small number of women reported that these topics were not covered by the programmes in which they participated. However answers of those who had been exposed to these topics showed that they were aware of the stereotype traditional roles being played by men and women, and some of them saw the role stereotyping and role expectations as being unjust to women. Others expressed the view that society had given leadership roles to men and a lesser role to women. However, there was a strong feeling that women did not have to stick to these roles because they have good ideas, sometimes better than men. One women stated that she now understands that women's place is not only in the home, and that *"I do not have to be just a housewife"*. However, while several realized that socialisation determines gender roles: *"in their youth the boys never helped in the house"*, several others, including those who had not participated in non-traditional skills training programmes said that there is no gender difference in jobs and that women can do what is considered men's work. Some women also indicated that male/female relationships are affected by men's belief that they can do no wrong and that their earning ability gives them power over women. Others felt that communication was an important factor in relationships and that in a relationship partners should help each other and share work. One woman said that the programme had increased her ability to cope with men's moods.

The programmes which were most influential in raising awareness and consciousness about gender issues were those which were designed to focus on such topics as women in politics, violence, women and work and to lesser extent workshops on leadership. Skills training programmes tended not to deal with these topics, and in those in which they were addressed it appears that there were problems and the outcomes were not very successful.

VII TRENDS AND ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND CHANGE

TRENDS AND ISSUES

Because the study only collected data from a small number of women in four countries definitive statements cannot be made about whether participating in non-formal education and training programmes have empowered those women who have been exposed to these programmes. However several important issues did emerge from the research process and outcomes, and from the data collected it is possible to discover certain trends.

The Providers

All of the agencies in the study indicated that they had organized, offered and provided non-formal education and training to women for several years, but while a few had developed programmes based on needs identified in community-based research the majority had not done any needs assessment on a regular basis. In many cases however, they had been able to identify specific training needs of women as they participated in various workshops and seminars. At the same time because of the UN Decade on Women, of the new awareness of women's condition and situation, and of their own knowledge of the problems women faced, e.g., unemployment, teenage pregnancy, and violence, these agencies had recognized the importance of offering programmes that they believed would address these issues and help women to solve some of these problems. In addition, the agencies hoped that through participation in their programmes women would not only gain a better understanding of their role in society, but would be more conscious of their right to equal opportunities.

Meeting women's educational needs

The study shows that women continue to participate in NFE programmes because of their search for knowledge and skills which they believe will help them to solve some of their problems and meet some of their needs. These needs are personal: self - improvement and development; and social: meeting and interacting with new people; as well as economic - increased ability to generate or gain employment, and to improve their financial situation. However, the data show that a significant number of women do not always get what they want or expect from participating in these programmes. This was especially so when they completed skill training which they hoped would lead to employment or income generation. At the same time several providers/agencies in an attempt to respond to this need have continued to offer skills training programmes that fail to meet it.

Examination of such programmes within this study not only revealed their failure to include topics and address issues such as quality control, market and marketability and societal attitude to women in non-traditional jobs, but also raised the question as to whether a skills training programme of three months is long enough for participants to acquire skills and produce products/goods that are of acceptable quality and marketable. On the other hand the data suggest that business management courses also usually of three months duration, do seem to help women who already have a marketable skill or product and to enable them to create employment and/or generate income.

Because of women's need to generate income and to improve their financial position it is likely that many providers will continue to offer these types of programmes. In order to ensure that the women who participate do get what they expect from the programmes, however, and that the programmes lead to economic empowerment of women, the providers must make a serious attempt to redesign their programmes and

to make sure that they:

- are geared to meet the women's specific need to increase their earning power.
- the content is not limited merely to teaching skills but includes other relevant topics and information.
- the course is long enough to allow participants to assimilate new knowledge, to acquire and master a skill and to be able to apply and use these to achieve their objectives of earning income.

Unlike the skills training programmes, those which are intended to result in personal and social development appear to have been more successful in achieving their objectives. Several women in the sample indicated that participation in these programmes did help to build their self-confidence and self-esteem, increased their sense of worth, and led to the realization that they could manage on their own. In addition the programmes did increase interpersonal skills, provided opportunity to share and learn from other women and in some cases resulted in changes in attitudes and behaviour. However, while these programmes resulted in some degree of personal empowerment, there was little evidence to show that the women who participated gained political empowerment and/on were motivated to take collective action to bring about change in women's situation.

Women who participate, as well as agencies that organize personal development training programmes, must begin to use and see these as a strategy for enabling and empowering women to take action to change their situation. In order to do this programme planners must design NFE programmes in such a way that participants can begin to see and understand the links between their personal experience and larger societal, i.e., economic, social and political, issues and the interplay of forces and factors that facilitate or hinder personal development and/or the achievement of

personal goals.

Women's Issues and Gender Issues

The data show that there is a definite trend to organize and offer more NFE programmes within which women's issues and gender issues are being addressed. There are several aspects of the trend which reflect different strategies being used to deal with these issues. One is the inclusion of a specific component/session on women/gender issues within a programme which focuses on some other topic, e.g., leadership, another is to organize specific programmes/workshops on a particular topic that raises women's/gender issues, e.g., violence, women and politics.

In the former case the session is usually designed to sensitize and raise awareness about women's condition and situation and does not always provide opportunities for participants to analyze the situation in depth or to identify the factors that contribute and are responsible for the existing situation. In the latter an increasing number of providers are organizing one and/or two day workshops on related topics e.g. women and work, and within these programmes participants are engaged in some analysis of women's reality, situation and condition and of gender roles and relations. From this analysis they are not only able to identify underlying causes but to explore strategies for changing the situation.

Women who have participated in these sessions and workshops have to some extent been empowered because of their new awareness and understanding of the issues and of the contributing factors, and because they have been motivated to take the first steps towards changing either their own situation or that of women in general. However the study did not produce evidence that the programmes had resulted in political empowerment of the women to the extent that more of them had used their new awareness and understanding of women's issues/gender issues, or been

motivated to organize themselves or mobilize other women to advocate, agitate or and to bring about change in women's situation.

Another aspect of this trend is the organization of gender training programmes and the deliberate attempt to target and encourage men to participate. Over the last five years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of gender training programmes in which women and a small number of men from all levels of the society are participating. Providers are organizing and offering such programmes in communities, with and for different organisations and institutions, e.g., civil service at national level in each country and at the regional level.

Evaluation and Follow-up

As with many other Non-Formal Education and Empowerment and training programmes, those examined in this study suffered from each of/insufficient evaluation and follow-up. In all cases evaluation, either oral or written was done at the end of the programme, however this was usually limited to an assessment of immediate outcomes e.g. what was learnt; and no further evaluation was done. Like wise the programmes examined were regarded as complete in themselves and there was no follow-up activity. Because of this trend it is extremely difficult, almost impossible on to assess the impact of NFE programmes on the lives of the women who participate in them, or to identify the extent to which and whether participation in the programmes have resulted in any lasting change in their lives or situation.

This tendency to continue to offer NFE programmes as isolated events and for women to continue to participate in them without serious consideration about their outcomes and impact suggests that valuable resources may be wasted and many opportunities for learning lost. Several of the women in this study indicated that the programmes did not meet their expectations, e.g., of leading to employment, but it appears that

the providers were unaware of this failure of the programmes. They would therefore be unable to use this information to inform future programmes. On the other hand there were programmes that did have a positive impact, e.g., raise awareness/increased understanding of issues, and as a result of which participants were motivated to act the providers had no evidence to show whether action did take place or to indicate how their programmes had contributed to any subsequent action.

The trend seems to be to continue to offer NFE programmes as isolated, one-time events, and for women to continue to participate in these without any serious attempts either to follow-up or to evaluate the effect and impact of such programmes on women's lives or situation. While it is evident that many women do see their participation in NFE as necessary and beneficial, the inability of providers as well as participants to clearly identify and articulate the way in which the programmes have contributed to change in women's situation not only at the personal but at the community and societal levels, is one issue that must be addressed.

CHALLENGES AND CHANGE

Participation in the NFE programmes examined in this study not only increased women's awareness, but helped them to see the need for change and to be willing to challenge some of the existing societal structures and systems that reinforce and perpetuate discrimination against women and help them in a position of disadvantage vis-a-vis men. Because some of the programmes raised awareness and increased consciousness, several participants were motivated to question and challenge existing practices and situations, e.g., women in St. Vincent who participated in the workshop on Women and Violence realized that this is on the increase and that the challenge facing them is not only to organize educational programmes to help women from becoming victims, but to offer similar programmes to teach men *"how to live with and treat women"*. One leadership training programme not only helped women to see that

the situation needed to be changed, but led them to commit themselves to be a part of the change. *"If it's the last thing I do, I will point the way for the rights of women".* In another instance, women who participated in the course in Education for National Leadership were of the view that both the parliamentary process and existing tax regulations needed changing, while women who participated in the workshop on Women and Politics identified the need for programmes to prepare women for more active involvement in the political process and felt that such programmes should be directed particularly at young women. Women in the other programmes expressed the view that women should not have to be dependent on men, that the idea of women's place is in the home must be eliminated and that society must stop taking women for granted. Some of the women were not only prepared to question and challenge but appeared be willing to initiate and be part of the change.

CONCLUSION

The study on Non-Formal Education and Empowerment of Women in the Caribbean and South Pacific shows that both government agencies and NGOs provide opportunities for women to participate in a variety of education and training programmes. The data show that while the providers of these programmes are attempting to meet women's educational, social, economic and political needs, not all of them are consciously using their programmes as a strategy to empower women. In spite of this several women who participated in this study did benefit from participating in NFE programmes in several ways. The benefits included increased awareness of women's situation and better understanding of the factors that are responsible for this, improved self confidence and new skills, a desire for change, greater ability to articulate the desired change and willingness to act to bring about change. However while many of these programmes did contribute to the personal empowerment, and to a lesser extent the political empowerment of the women who participated, they appear to have been unsuccessful in helping the women to achieve economic empowerment.

As a result of participating in this study and especially in the research workshops several women have realized the extent to which they are disadvantaged and powerless, as well as the ways in which participating in NFE programmes can help them to become empowered. Moreover the study produced some evidence to show that some of them did feel that participating in NFE programmes did empower them in some way.